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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



[The Editor is not responsible for opinions expressed in this Department.]

TOO MUCH CRITICISM AND NOT ENOUGH PRAISE

DEAR EDITOR: I wonder why, in *THE JOURNAL OF NURSING*, there is so much fault found with the nurses, and so little praise given. Censure, although unpleasant to receive, undoubtedly does us good if at the same time we are commended for the good we do or the admirable qualities we possess: but I do not believe that censure alone is often of much benefit. Miss Dock writes about the extravagant, wasteful American nurse, as though that term could be applied to all nurses, or almost all. This is a mistake, for there are as many industrious, economical women among the nurses as would be found in any other class of working women. You seldom find nurses who rent furnished rooms leaving their rooms in the evening for even half an hour without turning the gas low, out of consideration for the landlady's purse. I speak from knowledge, not from hearsay, and on duty we, as a class, are no more wasteful of gas, food, or any other commodity, than if we had to bear the expense.

Some one has known of a nurse who has not given her patient a bath during the illness. I do not know of how long duration was the sickness, but this nurse is only one in a thousand, and she will soon have to sit in a rocking-chair and wonder why there is no work coming to her. As a general thing, patients get a daily bath, and an alcohol rub twice, sometimes twenty times, a day.

One nurse meets another with a patient on the street in New York, and this nurse is as well clad as her patient, so the conclusion is at once drawn that she is an extravagant woman, dressing beyond her means and not saving for the proverbial rainy day that is sure to come. This well dressed nurse lifted her skirt and displayed a pretty silk petticoat and well shod feet. She wore a becoming hat, nice gloves, and altogether was a well dressed woman—and a well dressed woman is always pleasant to look upon, whether she toils for a living or belongs to the leisure class. There is no merit in shabby or cheap clothes; if obliged to wear such garments, most of us can do so and not grumble, but to enjoy doing so, or to feel we are better for so doing, is a horse of another color. Some of the nurses in Chicago whom I know are always well dressed. If doing

housework, they have on a plain, neat house dress (usually stripes), and when on the street a tasteful street garb. One or two pretty dresses, for the occasional reception or theatre, usually complete the wardrobe. One nurse took from her trunk some old silk which already had done considerable service, and sat down to the sewing-machine. With the outlay of a few dollars, by evening a handsome silk petticoat was shown. She, like the New York nurse, has undoubtedly often been criticised for extravagance.

There are many nurses who could take *THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING*, yet who do not; but there are many who do not take it because of the grim necessity they are under to count the pennies, and they will pay half with some one else. I believe there are at least three readers to one subscriber. Some time ago I read an article in *Harper's Magazine* on the trained nurse, written by a clergyman. He spoke of her as a fine type of womanhood, brave, self-reliant, and always ready to help her neighbor. Another article in as good a magazine (I have forgotten which) spoke of their courage. The writer of this article says that fear is almost unknown among physicians or trained nurses. After reading so much criticism, it gave me pleasure to read these articles. And now, dear editor, is it not just as well when criticising, to do a little praising? All of us have faults, and many of us very serious ones, but we are not a bundle of faults and nothing else.

HARRIET E. SIGSBEE,
Salida, Col.

[We have much sympathy with this writer, and we want to assure her that we do not for a moment lose sight of that splendid group of private nurses who go steadily on year after year giving skilled, conscientious, womanly service to the multitude. It is because of the injustice to these women that we lend our pages so frequently to condemnation of those nurses whose conduct brings criticism to all members of the great nursing body. The mercenary, heedless, immoral type of woman in the ranks must be made to feel the disapproval of every reputable member of the nursing profession.—ED.]

ANOTHER SUGGESTION FOR THE SLIDING SCALE

DEAR EDITOR: I am much interested in the comments which appear from time to time in *THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING*, with reference to caring for "the great middle class."

Would it be too much to expect our graduates to work for fifteen dollars a week, or, if need be, less, for the first year or two after they leave the hospital? Or at least they might be willing to accept less remuneration than the nurse who has stood the fire five, ten, or fifteen years. I